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CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE NEEDS OF ADULTS FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AS A BASIS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT.

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Concepts of felt need, educational experience, program development, and program evaluation are variables significant to the appraisal of adult educational needs. Although the existence of a social problem often indicates that educational needs exist, individual needs are more useful than social problems as a basis for program development. Experts and potential participants are both important in the appraisal process. The focus of this essay suggests the usefulness of distinguishing between ways of meeting needs, and indicates that situational adjustments, along with learning, educative, and educational adaptations, might be appropriate on various occasions. The importance of autonomy and application as distinguishing characteristics of adult learners must also be stressed, together with the use of methodological rigor and judgmental balance, and the selection of needs to which a given agency or program elects to respond. The following activities might aid in need appraisal--delimiting the scope, describing potential participants, setting forth criteria of success, selecting most pertinent needs, relating needs to program design, and predicting widespread or emerging needs. (The document includes 36 references.) (ly)

CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE NEEDS OF ADULTS FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AS A BASIS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

The identification of the needs of people as a basis for developing educational programs is an exceedingly difficult process. More fuzzy thinking has surrounded this slippery subject than almost any other connected with the entire enterprise of teaching and learning. What is a need? Is an educational need the same as other needs? How is a need related to a lack, an interest, a social problem, a want, a goal, or a deficiency? Who can best identify a person's need? The person himself? Someone else? How can an educator most effectively proceed to appraise educational needs of adults?

Needs of adults are always recognized in some terms during the process of developing any adult education program, if only in the assumptions we make concerning why we should hold the program or why adults would be interested in participating. The development of a continuing legal education workshop on recent tax law changes, for instance, assumes that there are lawyers who do not sufficiently understand the changes but who need to do so. The point is not that we should identify educational needs of adults in the program development process, but that we should do a better job of doing so! Our task is made possibly more difficult by the fact that learners in an educational program must exert effort and attention in order to learn. If the needs we seek to identify and appraise are to provide a basis for program development, they must be relevant enough to the learner to evoke the requisite effort and attention. Given these circumstances related to appraisal of educational needs, expect no easy solutions.

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Detailed Definitions of Major Variables

An effort to specify the nature of an educational need in a somewhat more precise way than is typically the case, might helpfully begin with a definition of five variables that seem crucial, if we are to proceed analytically. The variables, as indicated in the title of this essay, are needs, educational experiences, adults, basis for program development, and critical appraisal.

NEEDS -- The term need is used in many different ways. The dictionary refers to "A condition requiring supply or relief.....; the lack of anything requisite, desired or useful.....; (a) want, ...anything needed or felt to be needed." Within this general usage, poeple refer to what they require, what they want, waht they think would be good for themselves even though it may not hold much appeal, societal needs, and what they think would be good for other people. For our purposes, more precision seems needed.

I find it helpful to think of a need as a gap between a present, or initial, or existing set of circumstances and some changed set of circumstances. Each set of circumstances can be specified in terms of knowledge, performance, and attitudes. The changed set of circumstances may be described in terms of how the individual and/or someone else would have the individual's knowledge, performance, and attitudes differ from the initial set of circumstances. For example, a manager of engineering may need to require almost all of the requisite understanding and skill for computer programming and a moderate increase in his understanding of ways to identify computer applications in his department. For any individual these gaps are in flux, shifting in number, magnitude and importance throughout the life cycle. There may be a need to know related to worker role during young adulthood, related to citizen role during middle age, and related to user of leisure during old age.

Writers from many disciplines have discussed the concept of needs in a variety of ways. Some have postulated one (to maintain and enhance the self concept), some have identified hundreds, some have stressed biological needs, some have stressed spiritual needs, and some have formulated hierarchies of needs. As interesting and useful as this theorizing is for research and for action, it does not seem essential to agree upon a particular theoretical position regarding the nature of needs in order to think about them as a basis for educational program development. Regardless of the rationale used to explain a need, the gap between an illiterate adult's reading level and his aspiration to obtain steady employment which requires reading ability, provides a basis for decisions regarding how to design and promote a program of adult basic education aimed at reading and teaching him.

Some writers have referred to "societal needs." The circumstances being referred to usually seem important, but it would seem preferable to use a different term, because there is a difference in kind between so-called societal needs and individual needs, a difference that is sufficient to warrant differentiation. It is granted that a group, community, or society is different from the sum of the individual members, even though no organized effort to do so is explicit. However, it is <u>individuals</u> who act, think, and want. Their thought and action may be influenced or coordinated in relation to their fellows, and the existence of a group, business, community, or society may depend upon the acceptance by its members of certain goals and compliance with certain procedures; but it is the <u>individuals</u>, whether singly or collectively, who think and act and feel. To help distinguish between these overlapping but different concepts, it would seem helpful to refer to so-called "societal needs" as social problems, or goals, or dislocations, or trends or even situational imperatives. Without broaching the issue of either divine or social determinism, it would seem reasonable to assume that these situational factors influence individual needs, but are sufficiently different to be con-

sidered separately. These societal problems and goals might be thought of as part of the total environment that may influence many individuals to have similar needs. The values that predominate in a given society may encourage some individuals to strive to close a gap between present and desired behavior that may not be seen to exist in another segment of our society or in another society. No brief is held regarding the relative importance of understanding and helping to resolve either individual needs or social problems. The point is that the two are different and from an adult education programming standpoint, should be viewed as such, whereas, the evidence of a societal problem, such as high rates of malnutrition in slum neighborhoods, indicates the existence of individual needs, the more detailed information about the gap between present and changed circumstances provides the basis for designing a health education program to close the gap.

Much of the writing about individual needs deals with what are termed <u>basic</u> needs. The reference point for defining <u>basic</u>, is sometimes biology and sometimes values. Each reference point deserves a word of caution. A review of the objectives and outcomes of educational programs in Canada and the United States reveals that seldom do they deal directly with biological needs. It is the character of biological needs that when the individual is deprived of food or sleep these needs take on overriding importance in his current needs system, but when he has more than a minimum amount, other acquired needs that are far less universal take on more major importance. In our affluent society, educational programs tend to relate primarily to acquired needs that are far more relative to time, place, and circumstance. For example, the need for occupational achievement that may encourage a high proportion of foremen to participate in a management development program, may be of little consequence to several other segments of the population such as young mothers, assembly line workers, or retired couples. As a result, the task of the adult education program planner is more complex because he must identify those needs that are relevant to a particular program, rather than assuming a set

of universal needs that will have direct implications for program objectives.

When the reference point for defining basic is values, a somewhat different hazard arises. There is a great tendency for people to define basic in terms of the values that they rank most high. What is called for, is not to suspend value judgements which would be impossible in any case, but to recognize that other value systems are tenable. For one person, basic needs may be highly competitive whereas for another they may be highly cooperative. In practice then, value judgements regarding the good, the true, and the beautiful would occur in the process of identifying needs for education, but the process would not stop here.

The questions remains-- Needs, as perceived by whom? In educational literature this question revolves around terms like wants, felt needs, and unfelt needs. Some contend that a need is a need only when it is recognized as such either consciously or sub-consciously by the individual, for only then does it provide any motive power to close the gap. Others hold that the major step in solving a problem is recognizing that it exists, so that the most pressing needs that people have are ones that are better recognized by others. Like so many either/or arguements, this one seems best approached as both/and for the purpose of appraising the needs of adults for learning experiences as a basis for educational program development; there are distinct benefits to be gained from understanding how the need is perceived by both the potential adult student and others (such as teachers and experts) who are in a position to help assess the need. If secretaries identify their major need regarding increased occupational competence for advancement as increased typing speed, but their supervisors stress human relations skills, the information that either could have provided is more than doubled and it is useful for both program planning and program promotion.

The most important reason why the individual adult should be involved in the process of appraising his needs, some of which might be met in part through participation in an educational program, is that his recognition that a gap exists is almost essential if he is to participate, and to learn, and to use what he learns from the educational program. Although the county agricultural extension agent may recognize that a marginal farmer does not adequately understand and apply sound principles of crop rotation and fertilizer application, it is unlikely that the marginal farmer will learn much on this topic until he recognizes his limited understanding and the importance of increasing it. Also, the individual often has a wealth of understanding concerning his need that, although sometimes distorted by defensiveness or wishful thinking, can contribute greatly to the program planner who is interested in developing an educational program relative to the individual's needs. Knowledge about how the individual views his needs that are related to a given aspect of life, can enable the program planner to help clarify for the individual both the nature of his need and how the educational program can help to close the gap. If the county agent discovers that the marginal farmer believes that his land is irretrievably poor, when in fact with proper fertilizers it could become competitively productive, then the agent has a basis for suggesting feasible procedures by which the farmer could diagnose and solve his production problems, instead leaving the farmer to yearn for the perhaps unattainable goal of someday getting a better farm. Knowledge of how the individual perceives his needs can also suggest issues, methods, and relevant subject matter that might result in a more compelling educational program.

There are a variety of ways in which persons other than an individual learner can contribute to the assessment of that individual's needs. One contribution

is the specification of objective standards of knowledge, skill, and attitude against which present performance of an individual can be compared to determine the magnitude and nature of the remaining gap or need. In our total society, such standards are so numerous, conflicting, indistinct, and shifting as to make it difficult to identify criteria against which individuals can be compared to decide what, if any, educational experiences are most needed. However, within the context of a specific domain of activity, such as a type of job or exercise of the franchise, there are sometimes objective standards that can serve as a reference point for the assessment of individual needs. These reference points are sometimes minimal (such as a rejection rate on an assembly line or some other minimum index of productivity), sometimes normative (such as the percentage of the time an individual votes compared with others in his community), and sometimes optimal (such as jury-selected prize winners in an artistic competition). Teachers and other experts who are knowledgeable in a given domain reflect and supplement such objective standards and provide an alternative reference point in the absence of any. Another contribution of experts to the assessment of needs is the prediction of needs that will probably emerge for many adults in a given category as a result of life-cycle change and societal change. From an examination of trends, experts can help us to anticipate some of the needs that many individuals will have in the future. One illustration of this, related to liberal education, is provided by the writings of Waller, and Cavan, and Havighurst concerning developmental tasks of adulthood. A description of relationships between developmental tasks and the characteristics of the adults who attend liberal education programs is provided in the report by Knox. (25)

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES-- The concern in this essay is to explore ways in which to appraise the needs of adults for educational experiences. This is

different from appraising adult needs generally. The difference lies in how a need is best met. Our present concern is with needs that are best met, at least in part, through educational experiences.

Part of the confusion between educational and non-educational means for meeting needs stems from the central role of adaptation or learning in meeting most needs. If a need is defined as a gap between an exisitng set of circumstances and some other set of circumstances, then closing the gap almost inevitably entails some adaptation or learning. For example, if a need for affiliation leads a middle aged homemaker to join a women's club, there are typically new procedures to be learned. The amount of learning or adaptation, however, may in many instances constitute a very minor portion of what is required to close the gap. If a member of a minority group is unable to obtain a job for which he is qualified, due only to discrimination, the needed learning to close the gap between unemployment and employment may be on the part of an employer. Even in cases where the requisite adaptation or learning is substantial, it may be better achieved as part of the ongoing life experience of the individual rather than as the objective of an educational experience. An example might be the substantial adjustments that occur for most couples during the first year of marriage. The determination of the needs that are best met, at least in part, through educational experiences, and those best met through other means, is one of the important types of decisions to be made by the adult education program planner. In doing so, it is helpful for him to be able to distinguish needed educational experiences, as a basis for educational program development, from needs for other kinds of experiences or adjustments.

If the adult education program planner is to appraise needs of adults as a basis for deciding that some are best met through certain kinds of educational

experiences, then he must be prepared to make distinctions regarding the relative educativeness of types of experiences, under certain circumstances, and the relation between needs or gaps and experiences that will help close the gaps. The important first step is the specification of the need. If the specification of the need includes a detailed description of need related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the individual, along with a similar description of an individual for whom the gap was closed, a comparison of the prior with the ideal circumstances would help identify the change in circumstances and increase in experience that would best close the gap. For instance, a comparison between the understanding and performance of sales trainees, and the competence of very successful salesmen, might identify as the major gaps for the trainees--limited empathy, and an inadequate repetoire of sales strategies. The next step is to analyze the identified circumstances and experiences that would close the gap, as a basis for determining whether or not an educational program is called for, and if so, of what kind. This analysis should allow the designation of a given adaptation as primarily one of the following types--situational, learning, educative, or educational.

Because almost all need related adaptations involve some learning, these categories largely represent differences in degree and approach. Situational adjustments are those accomplished primarily by changes in the environment, such as an increase in pay, a move to a new community, or the availability of a needed physical or human resource such as water or a loved one. The initiative to effect the change may be taken by the individual with the need or he may have to rely on others, either at their own choosing or at his urging, to do something or cease doing something. A man with asthma may urge his doctor and his employer to make certain decisions that will result in his transfer to a job in a more favorable climate. Related adaptation

or learning may facilitate the acquisition of the change in the environment of adjustment to the changed circumstances, but for situational adaptations, the primary means of closing the gap is a change in the environment.

The most frequent examples of adaptation may be classified within the learning type. This type includes the multitude of instances in which the individual responds to a need by accomplishing numerous gradual alterations in his knowledge, skill, and attitudes. Many workers learn a major part of their job in this way. This process usually occurs without the individual's consciously thinking of himself as learning or as doing anything related to education. In many instances this is an entirely satisfactory process, closing the gap in a manner well integrated into the remainder of the individual's life experience. It sometimes occurs during periods of gradual change in patterns of daily life, such as living with growing children, and other times occurs in response to a major change in life circumstances, such as a move to a new type of job.

The educative type of adaptation includes most of the characteristics of the learning type. It occurs when the individual confronts one or more gaps, the closing of which would be facilitated by major new learning, and decides to close the gap by taking the initiative in attempting to alter his own knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The adult who successfully does so is the self-directed learner, as described by Houle and associates. (21, 34). The person who is engaging in educative experiences as opposed to one engaging in other learning experiences, recognizes his purpose as an intent to alter his behavior and anticipates that the selected experience will achieve this purpose. For example, the adult who sets out to teach himself to play chess has a learning goal in mind, and can alternate reading and practice as a way of achieving the

goal.

The educational type of adaptation has most of the characteristics of the educative type and occurs when the individual solicits the assistance of an agency or individual other than himself to help him to close the gap, sometimes to the extent of delegating to the agency the responsibility for directing his efforts to adapt. This occurs when an engineer enrolls for a masters degree in business administration through the evening division of a university. Activities are selected because they are perceived as having a high likelihood of aiding adaptation, although it may be the certification rather than the increased competence that is sought. Our concern as adult education program planners and as teachers is mainly with the last two types of adaptation - the educative and the educational. Our goal is to provide the educational in response to the most important needs of adults, in such a way that we encourage them to continue to engage in the educative.

There are, of course, many kinds of educational experiences, which vary greatly in terms of complexity, scope, subject matter, and life role with which they are connected. Some, such as job related educational experiences, are frequently more readily identified in relation to the major tasks of the worker role. This allows the specification of standards within the profession or work organization against which to ascertain gaps or needs for a specific individual. In a hospital setting, the position description for the nursing supervisor provides a reference point against which to assess the performance of the encumbents. For others, such as liberal education experiences, there seems to be less agreement regarding standards of knowledge, skill, and attitude, against which to compare the present set of circumstances. The theoretical formulations regarding what

constitutes liberal education are many. Some emphasize non-sustancence role performance (such as citizen role and user of leisure role); some emphasize breadth of knowledge (such as familiarity with great books); some emphasize communication skills related to the process of learning (such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking); and some emphasize disceipline of the mind (such as imagination, precision, appreciation, and synthesis). In the absence of greater agreement regarding the characteristics of a more liberally educated person, the person who attempts to appraise needs as a basis for educational program development must either adopt a highly permissive stance in which the individual learner becomes the determiner of his own goals regarding his liberal education, or adopt a theoretical position regarding what a more liberally educated person would be like. The latter approach is illustrated by the Great Books discussion groups. If the educator selects the latter approach, it is important that he attempt to convey the objectives of his program clearly to potential adult students so that they have a basis for determining if they want to participate.

ADULTS -- Although the foregoing comments regarding needs apply to any learners, they seem particularly helpful in considering educational programs for adults. Adults are defined in the present context as persons about 16 to 21 years of age or older, who are beyond full time continuous schooling and who have assumed some of their adult responsibilities in their worker or family or citizen roles. Two related characteristics distinguish them from youngsters in terms of assessment of needs as a basis for educational program development. One is the relative autonomy that may be assumed regarding the decision by an adult to participate in an educational activity. As children move from elementary school to secondary school to college to graduate school, it is assumed

that with greater experience and maturity they can assume more responsibility for the guidance of their educational program. (The fact that this too seldom occurs is beside the point.) If this reasoning is sound, adults should be allowed even more opportunity to influence educational endeavors in which they participate. In some instances, the early portion of an adult education program is devoted to a discussion of the program objectives, consensus on needed modifications, and a subsequent modification of emphasis and procedures. The second characteristic is the opportunity that most adults have to relate directly their educational experiences to ongoing life roles, compared with the delayed application of most youth education. Many adult education programs are related directly to application, such as an in-service training program for teachers in which one benefit is curriculum revision. This latter characteristic allows direct access to the criteria against which successful application of learning experiences can be compared, and the former characteristic provides an opportunity for the potential learner to contribute to the appraisal process.

BASIS FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT -- The program planner's application of his appraisal of the needs of adults for educational experiences, is in the development of an educational program. Information about client needs is used to select subject matter, teachers, and instructional methods. This program development usually occurs within the context of an agency or organization with its purpose and resources. A program to meet the educational needs of volunteer firemen may be outside of the resources and purposes of a community college adult education division. No institution or agency can be all things to all people. The program planner has an obligation to identify those needs that can be met within the purposes and resources of the sponsoring agency and to develop a program within the agency to meet these effectively. In addition to the philosophical screen of

desirability through which identified needs might pass to determine which ones an agency should attempt to meet, there is a psychological screen of possibility that asks for each identified need, is this a gap that education can substantially help to close? In practice, even if the director of the adult services office of a YWCA decided that group therapy sessions for neurotic housewives were desirable, she would still have to decide if such a program would be feasible given the resources of the agency.

CRITICAL APPRAISAL -- We come now to the last of the five variables we set about to define. Critical appraisal should be a means of moving our thinking about educational needs from the realm of assumption and wishful thinking to a more precise understanding of the gap, and of educational experiences, and of their relation to each other. The complexity and changing nature of people no doubt dooms our best efforts to an approximation. However, the present state of man's knowledge allows us to make closer approximations than we have usually done in the past. At the same time, in our efforts to understand and deal with educational needs im more careful and rigorous terms, we must be cautious not to limit our purposes and programs to the meeting of needs easily measured or counted. Some programs may be justified largely on faith in the ability of the learner to increasingly clarify his purposes, search for meaning, and increase his competence, even though the teachers and program administrators may not fully understand the learners educational needs. Our efforts to take into account objective standards of performance, judgements of experts, and the perception of need by the individual learner should serve to further encourage the human imagination and spirit to dream no small dreams, as the educational programs we help to construct effectively help to close the gap for needs that really exist and to help learners to recognize the needs more fully. In this regard, the appraisal of needs is an integral part of

the continuing process of educational evaluation as we use it to better understand and improve all aspects of the program development process. Educational evaluation, if it is to perform this function, must be more than asking participants how they liked the educational program. It must share with research in the behavioral sciences many of the same methods of inquiry, but requires less concern for a well developed theoretical framework and for the ability to generalize to other people and situations. Instead, the results of educational evaluation can be used directly to improve the process being evaluated, and to this end is much more effective if those who will be affected, the learners and the teachers, are involved in the evaluation process. Our efforts to critically appraise needs will have more lasting benefit if the process we employ aids the adult learners and their teachers in their efforts to also appraise needs.

Methods of Appraising Needs

The foregoing sections of this essay provide a basis for a somewhat greater specification of variables and concepts related to appraisal of needs. This section briefly describes six activities in which an adult education program planner might engage in order to appraise needs.

1. Delimit the domain with which you are concerned. The totality of man's needs easily becomes a description of everything and everything else. From a practical program development standpoint it seems reasonable to limit the scope of the type of gap for which one is looking. A more exploratory, open-ended approach might call for a research project, instead of an adjunct to program planning.

2. Describe in some detail the relevant characteristics of the potential participants. The difficulty in performing this phase of need appraisal varies with the availability of persons who are to be, or who are very much like, the potential participants. One of the best estimates of the characteristics of the adults who will attend an anticipated program is the characteristics of the adults who have attended previous similar programs. The results of a clientele analysis can provide many cues in this regard. Other sources of information include company or organizational records, diagnostic test scores, ideas from participants in other similar programs, and conversations with potential participants. The great value of involving the potential participant in the need appraisal process is that this helps to clarify for him the nature of his needs, helps build commitment to the importance of meeting the need, and provides a basis for the program planner to more effectively demonstrate the relevance of the educational program issues to the potential participant's needs.

3. Describe what a successful person would be able to do, think, and feel, relative to the area of need. It is the relation between this information, and that obtained in the prior step, that defines the need or gap to be closed. Information regarding this step can be obtained from successful practitioners, persons at the next higher level in the organization, experts, teachers, and consultants. This approach seems preferable to asking such people what someone else needs, because of the propensity of people to project their own feelings and predispositions into what they prescribe for others.

4. Recognize that in program development only some of the needs that are identified can be dealt with. The groupings of needs that will be identified in the program development process tend to be unique to the group of people involved and the particular situation. Individuals will have some order of preference for the needs that they want met, and the persons connected with an agency will have some priorities regarding those needs with which they should be concerned. The number of needs that are finally selected will probably constitute a small proportion of those considered.

5. Relate the needs that are identified and selected to the issues and methods that are included within the resulting program design. The needs should be described in sufficient detail so that the program planner or teacher can readily identify the areas of subject matter and learning and teaching methods that are most relevant. The development of an adult education program frequently proceeds without the benefit of detailed information about the pertinent needs of the adult participants. Under these circumstances, teachers usually assume that the needs of the prospective participants are similar to those previously enrolled in such a course. Because this practice is so widespread, when needs are appraised in the program development process, it is important to explore their implications so that the resulting program is based on an understanding of the related needs instead of the usual assumptions. More precise and detailed information about needs can provide a basis for selecting that combination of subject matter, resource persons, and methods that most effectively contribute to the achievement of program objectives.

Need appraisal provides essential information for the adult educator to perform one of his unique functions, as an expert in the design of effective learning experiences for adults.

6. Look for the needs that tend to be recurring or emerging, as a basis for anticipating the types of educational programs likely to be called for in the near future. The heavy orientation of the foregoing approach to need appraisal toward the present needs of adults, should not obscure the opportunity we have to use the information as a basis for predicting trends for the future and recurring needs of adults. The changing circumstances during the adult life cycle, in a family, in a company, or in a community suggest areas to examine further in the appraisal of individual human needs, as a basis for educational program development.

Application of Need Appraisal to Program Development

A somewhat detailed illustration, at this point, may be helpful. The illustration deals with the citizen role of urban adults but might just as well have dealt with adults having any set of characteristics in relation to any one or a combination of life roles. Assume that a new target audience that you want to reach consists of the adults in a community who are moderately active in community organizations, somewhat interested in public affairs, and knowledgeable about the basic structure of local government. Assume also that you decide that before proceeding to plan, staff and promote an adult education program on local government, you will arrange for some of the faculty who might be working with the resulting program to contribute to a critical appraisal of needs. The need appraisal process might include the following general steps. First, from conversations with

people active in a cross-section of community organizations develop a list of people with the characteristics of the target audience. Select a small random sample, and visit briefly with each one regarding his activities, knowledge, and interests related to public responsibility. Second, select a random sample of persons in the community who have been most active and successful in understanding and doing what you hope the participants will be better able to understand and do if your program is successful. Visit with these community leaders regarding issues, decision making processes, their role regarding public issues, and how they became active in public affairs. Third, decide on the differences between the target audience and the community leaders that can best provide a basis for an educational program, in terms of what education can accomplish, the interests of the potential audience, and the purposes of your institution. The description of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that the participants in the projected program would be reasonably expected to have after the program, that was not the case beforehand, constitutes a set of program objectives. Such a set of objectives might stress developing an understanding of the relation between a detailed knowledge of community issues and the process by which they are resolved, along with encouraging a commitment to assuming more major public responsibility.

Assuming that objectives of this sort are derived from a critical appraisal of needs, what implications do they hold for program development? A lecture series, a credit course, or even a discussion group would not seem adequate to accomplish these objectives. An educational program designed to close the gap suggested in this illustration would more likely have characteristics similar to the following brief description of a Community Leadership Seminar.

The Seminar might extend over at least one academic year under the direction of a Seminar Program Chairman, probably a political scientist specializing in local government. Other faculty and resource persons from the community might also participate. The need appraisal interviews might serve to identify about thirty participants with the background, experience, and interest for the Seminar. The interviews with community leaders might also serve both to obtain nominations of prospects and, from descriptions of how the leaders themselves became active, to suggest ways of identifying the pool of people currently active in community affairs from which the next wave of community leadership would probably emerge. The preliminary planning by the Seminar faculty might include the identification of ascendent community-wide issues. Fortunately, or unfortunately, most communities these days have a large selection of such issues from which to choose. The early sessions, and related readings, might be devoted to a review of the selected issues, with participants or groups of participants preparing background papers that would be read by all and discussed briefly by the total group. The Seminar faculty and resource persons might be available for consultation at this stage. All participants would read a common set of background materials dealing with theory, structure and functions of government and private groups in dealing with major public issues. The Seminar participants might then select two or more of these issues for more major study. For each selected issue, a sub-committee of the Seminar might conduct a major study, talking not only with Seminar resource persons, but also with the specialists and decision makers who are actually connected with the issue. Members of the sub-committee might interview them or the decision makers might meet with the sub-committee. The sub-committee might then prepare a position paper, including possibly a minority report, in which the issues would be analyzed and a course of action proposed. A possible course of action might be taking no action at that time.

The position paper might then be distributed to the decision makers and specialists with a request for reaction and comment. As a final step, the sub-committee might develop and utilize a plan for bringing the final position paper to the attention of the public, through newspaper articles, public debates, and presentations to interested groups. A program design along these lines might do more to meet the need for more understanding of the relation between community issues and decision making, and for more commitment to assuming positions of public responsibility, than most adult education public affairs programs.

Summary

This essay has examined several concepts related to the appraisal of educational needs of adults. A need has been defined as a gap between an individual's existing set of circumstances and some changed set of circumstances, specified in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. When thinking about needs as a basis for developing educational programs, it seems helpful to separate the concepts educational need and social problem. The existence of a social problem frequently indicates that educational needs exist: however, the foregoing formulation is presented as a more useful basis for educational program development than one based primarily on social problems. The specification of the existing and changed circumstances can be aided greatly by both the potential participants and by experts.

The concern of this essay with appraisal of needs for educational experiences suggested the usefulness of distinguishing between ways of meeting needs; and indicated that situational adjustments, along with adaptation of the learnin educative, and educational types might on various occasions be appropriate. The section on appraisal of educational needs of <u>adults</u> emphasized the importance of two characteristics of adult learners that distinguish them from youngsters--au-

tonomy and application. The use of need appraisal as a basis for educational program development emphasized the selection of needs to which a particular agency or program elects to respond. The stress on critical appraisal of needs emphasized both methodological rigor and judgemental balance, including factors not easily appraised.

Six activities were suggested that might aid an adult education program planner in need appraisal. The six activities were: 1) delimit the domain, 2) describe the potential participants, 3) describe what a person who is successful, relative to the need, would be like, 4) select the needs that are most pertinent, 5) relate needs to program design, and 6) predict emerging or widespread needs. A detailed illustration was presented to illustrate how these activities and other need appraisal concepts might be related to the program development process.

The critical appraisal of adult needs for educational experiences constitutes a point at which one of the most difficult steps in the program development process can be substantially improved with immense benefit to adult education agencies and the adults they serve.

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